

HEART TO HEART

Margie Lawson

Keynote speaker at RWNZ's 2008 conference, A Romantic Interlude

Interview by Gracie Stanners

Gracie: You're a counselling psychologist with post-masters specialisations in marriage and family therapy, and hypnotherapy. What drew you to work with writers?

Margie: I'm a writer too. I created my deep editing techniques and systems so I could understand how to add psychological and emotional power to my writing. I didn't conceptualize and orchestrate a big plan to share my psychological expertise with writers. It's one of those happy and fortuitous it-just-evolved stories. Writers didn't have anywhere else to acquire this knowledge – and they needed it. I used to teach college, from undergraduate to post-graduate courses. Abnormal Psychology, Group Dynamics, Psychology of Learning, plus all the other courses I taught, gave me a strong foundation to teach writers. Not that writers are abnormal. ;-)))

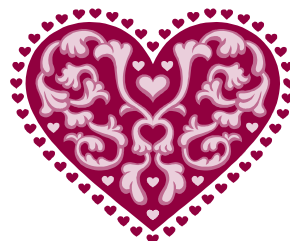
Gracie: You made a comment on your website--referring to your analysis of hundreds of best-selling books--that you found thirty-plus 'skimmers' to every 'page turner.' We all want to write page turners! What, according to your research, constitutes a page turner?

Margie: Most writers don't know why some writing hooks them. They don't know why some books are page turners. They don't know why when they read certain books, they become engaged viscerally. Heart rate up, breathing shallow, muscles tense. They could be reading any genre – and have the same gut-wrenching, jaw-clenching physical response. And still not know how the writer grabbed them. We've all read passages that by their content, should have hooked us emotionally, but didn't. We've written scenes that we expected to pop, but went pfft. They fizzled.

I didn't have a big plan to develop any courses. I dove deep into analyzing books and developing systems so I could understand how writers were successful at capturing emotion on the page. I wanted to learn from them. I wanted to be successful too. Over time, my systems evolved, courses evolved, and presentations evolved. Voila! My non-fiction writing career was launched.

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To subscribe to the RWNZ online loop, which is dedicated to the support of its writers by and for members, send a blank email to NZromance-subscribe@yahoogroups.com or contact giovanna@xtra.co.nz for information about the loop.

To join RWNZ's critique partner register, run jointly with RW Australia, email the coordinator Rachel Robinson on rachelrobinson@dodo.com.au

EDITOR'S DESK

This month Heart to Heart is jam-packed with inserts, including a flier about A Romantic Interlude – hooray! President Pat has been seeding snippets of information into her column for a couple of months and I'm probably not the only one keen to see the finished conference programme courtesy of our hard-working conference committee.

Margie Lawson's workshops intrigue me – if you get a moment, have a look on her website www.margielawson.com. Her workshops are obviously highly valued by writers. Good on our committee for arranging for a well-respected writing coach like Margie to talk to us. Our thanks to Gracie Stanners for putting together an informative interview with Margie so we can be well prepared to make the most of Margie's workshops in August.

Are you going to conference? If you've never been, it really is worth considering – even once. You'll find us a friendly bunch even if you haven't met anyone in person.

My first conference experience was a lot like Shirley Megget's (see page 14) – for I met Barbara Clendon for the first time and she was wearing these FABULOUS fur-trimmed high-heeled boots!

Now I'm fortunate to count Barbara and her equally fantastic husband Peter, who together run *Barbara's Books*, as friends. But it occurred to me that many newer RWNZers might not know the significance of the Clendon's support for the Clendon Award.

Shirley's provided some important insight into the contributions the Clendons have made to RWNZ, and next month Shirley will talk to short story contest sponsor Chapter Books & Café.

Due to work commitments I was starting to think I wouldn't be able to go to conference this year, which made me feel pretty glum. It's simply just the best time catching up with friends – and that alone made me realise that I have to do all I can to be there. In this solitary world of writing, we need all the friends and face-to-face contact we can get!

We had so many good articles this month that the contest, industry and market news is shorter than normal, but we'll be back into that important material

next month with the support of a new contest page contributor (thank you, Lisa).

Enjoy this issue of Heart to Heart and my ongoing thanks to those who contribute such great items on time each month.

Ciao

Kate

Contributions sought

Heart to Heart welcomes contributions from RWNZ members and from people with expertise relevant to our members of the following types:

- Interviews with authors, agents and publishing industry personnel
- With particular relevance to the romance genre, articles regarding writing techniques, the life of a writer, motivation, the industry, etc.
- News on markets, opportunities and competitions

Please contact the editor, Kate Gordon, to discuss.

Contributions should ideally be unpublished. Copyright reverts to the author two weeks after publication in Heart to Heart, or earlier by arrangement.



Barbara & Peter Clendon

President's welcome

This newsletter is stuffed full of good news.

You will find a flyer on our upcoming conference, "A Romantic Interlude", and a hard copy of the registration form for those of you who do not have internet access will be available next month. Again we are going with online registration and I am pleased to announce that this now live. Get your running/walking shoes on and check it out on our website www.romancewriters.co.nz on the conference page.

As promised in my last column, we are able to announce that Angela James, Executive Editor at Samhain Publishing will be holding an early-bird workshop on Saturday morning. This will be run with a similar format to last year's. Participants are asked to submit one page of your book to Angela. She will then select several to be read out and critiqued. All entries will be anonymous so don't let the thought of someone knowing what you have written stop you from entering. We will advise closer to conference when the submissions have to be in and where they should be sent.

We can also tell you that once again Harlequin Mills & Boon Australia has agreed to sponsor a member of their staff to our conference. Rosie Koop will be in attendance most of the weekend and I am sure will be ready and willing to answer questions.

Harlequin Mills & Boon London is sending Jenny Hutton to our conference. Jenny joined the Mills & Boon team just over two years ago having previously resided in the world of media publishing and before that a financially stretched Masters student. She acquires for all the M&B series, giving her the chance to work with a varied and talented author base and indulge in her passion for reading romance. She will be taking pitches during conference.

The Executive

The call is going out for nominations for the RWNZ Executive – nomination forms are in this issue of *Heart to Heart*, as well as a call for remits for the AGM. Sally Rigby, our hard-working secretary, is stepping down after the maximum four year term so we need someone to replace her. If you are interested in standing for any executive position, please send me an email with any questions and I will do my best to answer them. Although time consuming, the satisfaction from helping our ever-growing, ever more professional association is immense. It doesn't matter where you live as long as you can join in our online committee meetings, you are eligible.

The Clendon Award

Judging is currently underway, so best of luck to all the entrants and congratulations on finishing a book with which to enter! Our ongoing thanks to Barbara and Peter for all their hard work and also to Maree Anderson for coordinating this very important competition again this year.

Conference Registration

This went live on our website on 21 April. To access the registration form, go to www.romancewriters.co.nz and click on registration form and it will send you to conference online. If you have problems, do not hesitate to contact me.

Well, that's all from me now.

Regards

Pat Snellgrove, President, RWNZ



Margie Lawson: Keynote speaker cont.

Gracie: Empowering Characters' Emotions is the full day Master Class you'll be giving at the RWNZ conference in August. How does your course differ from others that might be available?

Margie: Empowering Characters' Emotions was created to teach writers how to write real emotion. Emotion so strong, so smooth, so immediate, that the reader is hooked viscerally. When the reader is hooked viscerally, and stays hooked, you've got a page turner.

You probably have the idea by now that my editing courses are different than editing courses taught by others. I'm not teaching about adverbs or passive voice. I go deeper. I teach psychologically based deep editing. It's material I developed.

I load my courses with fresh content – tons of content – information that writers need, that is not available elsewhere.

The list in the course description shares the topics, and each topic is packed with meat. I also include passages from authors, debut to award-winning, to show examples of things like how to write the full range of nonverbal communication, how to write fresh facial expressions, how to amplify a smile in ten ways, how to write paralanguage (vocal cues) in fresh ways and not fall into predictable patterns.

I've analyzed over a thousand books. Dissected them. Scrutinized passages that worked and passages that didn't work. I analyzed body language and developed ways to teach writers how to write it in fresh ways. I used my psychological expertise to figure out how writers can speak to the reader's unconscious. How to write emotion and build tension to hook the reader viscerally.

From my research, I developed editing tools that all writers can use to add psychological power. I created an EDITS System, created Four Levels of Powering Up Emotion, created dozens of deep editing tips. Whether a new writer, newly published, multi-published, or award-winning author – all writers can improve their writing craft with these psychological techniques, add deep editing tools to their toolbox, and take their writing to a higher level.

My courses are also different because they are structured like graduate level courses. I taught graduate courses to doctoral psychology students for six years. Both of my editing courses -- Empowering Characters' Emotions, and Deep Editing: The EDITS System, Rhetorical Devices, and More – are as organized and as content-loaded as any graduate course. They each have



over 250 pages of lectures. They have assignments. The only difference between the graduate level courses and my editing courses is the assignments are optional, and there are no tests.

Hmm -- unless you consider the test -- improving your writing to the point that you finish in contests, or get a contract, or get a better contract, or get on the New York Times Bestseller List.

Gracie: I did the Empowering Characters' Emotions course online about eighteen months ago and I learned so much. I can't wait to take it again "in the flesh." Do many writers take your courses more than once?

Margie: Since my courses are heavy on new content, a significant percentage of writers retake my courses. When any of us learn new material, the first time through, we can only absorb maybe 60% of it. Only retain 20%.

I think of it like this: when writers take my courses for the first time, they are busy building shelves in their minds for this new material. They are able to put some information on those shelves. The second time taking the course, the shelves are ready. Writers are able to load the shelves with the material, assimilate it, and learn to apply it to their writing.

I love teaching writers. Love watching them learn. Love watching them succeed.

Gracie: We're told that our voice is our most important asset. That a fresh voice and a gripping style are what agents and editors are looking for. Is it possible to over-edit?

Margie Lawson: Keynote speaker cont.

Margie: It's important to note that my editing techniques keep a writer's voice and style intact. I teach writers how to take what they have and make it better. I teach them how to edit what's on the page, and see what's missing. How to make their writing resonate with the reader, just like their favourite author's writing resonates with them. I can look at passages, dissect them, and show writers what the author did that made that passage stellar. I can teach writers how to create their own passages that are stellar.

Gracie: I believe you're currently developing a Deep Editing Workbook for fiction writers. When will this be available? At the NZ conference? PLEASE say yes!!! LOL

Margie: Yes, I'm taking material from my two editing courses and creating a Deep Editing Power Workbook. Deep Editing Power would be the first in a series of five workbooks. I envision them in a format similar to Donald Maass' Writing the Breakout Novel Workbook. Donald Maass covers plot. I cover the full range of deep editing.

It's too soon to say when it will be available. I'll let you know. :-)))

Gracie: You're also co-authoring a mainstream suspense--with your husband! That sounds like fun!

Margie: Ah – I'll expose the mystery of co-authoring. ;-))) Lucky for us, most of the suspense, tension, and conflict is in the story, not the co-authoring process!

Honest – my husband and I have such fun brainstorming together. Then, we decide who writes which scenes – and we edit each other's work. Given my propensity for deep editing, I dive into my scenes, as well as his scenes, and deep edit, deep edit, deep edit . . .

Collaborating usually involves synapses cross-firing between our brains, but it's not always magical. When needed, we use a 100 POINT PLAN. If we don't agree on something, we quantify it. The writer has up to 100 points. The challenger has up to 99 points. If the challenger gives their suggestion 40 or 50 points, they realize they can easily let it go if the writer's points are higher.

No external conflict. No internal angst.

If the challenger has heavy-duty points in the 80's and 90's, the writer usually rethinks it. Often the scene is tweaked, torqued, or trashed, resulting in a new scene that pleases both writers. A scene that carries power.

Like every writer, our goal is to plot and craft the best scene possible. It's easy to jettison your idea when the other person's idea is better. ;-)))

Gracie: What is, for you personally, the most exciting aspect of writing fiction?

Margie: Ah – As much as I love writing a new scene, what I love more, is the process and the outcome of deep editing. Playing with cadence. Pulling the reader deep into the scene with rhetorical power. Creating a Dialogue Run that's pitch-perfect for both characters, and it's snappy, it picks up pace. Writing emotion that hooks the reader viscerally, grabs their heart and doesn't let go.

Deep Editing is exciting. It's fresh. It's my kind of fun.

Gracie: If you had to choose the three most important ways a writer could improve her work, what would they be?

Margie:

- 1. Make your work fresh. Nix clichés and write non-verbals fresh.**
- 2. Limit the number of lines the POV character is in their head. Using my EDITS System, writers know every line and paragraph where the POV character is thinking. Revise, tighten, turn part of it into dialogue, or cut. Paragraphs of thinking invite the reader to skim. And they do.**
- 3. When the POV character experiences an emotional stimulus, include a visceral reaction as well as optional responses including dialogue, nonverbals, action, and internalizations.**

Gracie: You're an extremely busy lady. How do you motivate yourself to write?

Margie: Motivation is easy – I'm always motivated. I must have the motivation gene. The challenge is finding the time. Working full time, teaching on-line courses, and presenting 15 full day master classes in 2008 is making for a push-yourself-hard year. No complaints. I love it all!



Diamonds Down Under

Part two of Kate Gordon's talk to Bronwyn Jameson, Tessa Radley, Maxine Sullivan, Paula Roe, Jan Colley and Yvonne Lindsay about their New Zealand—

Australia continuity success story

Last month we talked to BRONWYN JAMESON (*Vows & A Vengeful Groom*), TESSA RADLEY (*Pride & A Pregnancy*) and MAXINE SULLIVAN (*Mistress & A Million Dollars*) and this month we talk to...

JAN COLLEY wrote book four, *Satin & A Scandalous Affair*, released in May 2008 in Australia and New Zealand.

Q: What have you enjoyed most about contributing to this continuity series?

JC: Undoubtedly getting to know five great girls, each with their own way of doing things, and their own special skills and interests to contribute.

The research was pretty damn fun too, diamonds, jewellery design, Port Douglas. Lastly, the thrill of knowing that the books are finally on the shelves, and the interest they are generating with Paula's amazing website. Which hopefully will bear out in great sales. Yum. Money!

Q: Would you like to work on another continuity series if the opportunity arose?

JC: Diamonds Down Under was my second continuity, coming straight after the Fortunes series, which was an editor-led continuity. It was interesting comparing the two processes. I would have preferred a break between them, to do my own thing without having to consider how it would affect others (yes, selfish of me...)

I would not hesitate to do another editor-led continuity, but the complexities and the huge amount of time Diamonds took have given me pause about another author-led project. It seemed a lot more complex than the Fortune series. I think we all agreed that the amount of time spent on this project could well have gone into writing two books! And if you are trying to make a living at this lark, it's just not economically sensible! In saying that, though, continuities are generally top sellers, since if a reader has gone to the trouble of buying the first



book, and enjoyed it, she doesn't want to miss the others.

Q: Writing is so often a solitary occupation. What has been the best thing about working together on a continuity project? Have you helped critique each other's work, or kept to your own critique partners?

JC: It has been fantastic, previous comments notwithstanding, to bounce ideas off the girls. Someone always knew or had access to or suggestions about a particularly tricky subject.

Among their many other talents, Yvonne's knowledge of and access to the aviation industry (pertaining to the plane crash and search) was invaluable. Tessa had a wealth of knowledge about the law, (pertaining to the will reading and disbursements). Bron's writing and continuity experience and wise counsel kept us all sane. Maxine's enthusiastic organisational skills meant she was able to look ahead and identify problems that might arise (and often did.) Paula had it tough, being brought in halfway when we had all decided on our characters, and she handled it beautifully and professionally and quickly became one of the gang. Her blood is worth bottling for the work she did on the website, which I'm sure you'll all agree, is probably the nicest website you'll see anywhere.

I brought my insecurities and was touched that they all held my hand and patted my head when I needed it!

We didn't critique each other's work as such but sometimes if we had a fairly major scene that integrated someone else's characters, we sent the scene to that author, just to make sure we'd done their character justice. For myself, I don't have a critique partner so it has been really great to be able to share plot ideas and get feedback, especially from people who are as invested in the project as you are. And it's good too to see how other writers work their magic from go to woe, the different processes they use.

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www.diamonds-downunder.com
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Diamonds Down Under: the continuity series

Satin & A Scandalous Affair

"I want you..."

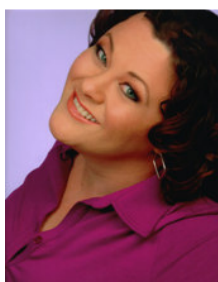
What would it take for Danielle Hammond to design a necklace for one of the world's highest-priced diamonds? Gem broker Quinn Everard wasn't above using blackmail to get Dani to take the job. She was the only designer worthy of the piece...and the only woman he wanted as his new mistress.

Insisting she complete her work at his secluded Australian home, the millionaire soon had Dani under his seductive influence. But he had to watch out...or the smart, sexy woman could uncover every one of his well-kept secrets.



PAULA ROE wrote book five, **Boardrooms & A Billionaire Heir**, due out in June '08.

Q: It sounds like there was a lot of work getting this collaboration together, but presumably there are also many benefits. Have there been any key things you've learned, for your own writing, and as working together as a team?



PR: It's strengthened my belief that romance writers are truly the best bunch of people to work with – creative out-of-the-box thinkers, offering praise when due and giving you heaps of stuff to think about when you need ideas. Sometimes we'll disagree or argue, but there are no grudges held. And for my own writing, I got a better grasp on Desire's reader promise, what they want from a story. I learned how to better increase pace and immediacy. And that the editors are pretty clever people when it comes to grammar :-)

Q: The Diamonds Down Under website is great and has obviously attracted steady traffic, judging from the comments. What other promotions have you worked on together? And is there any advice you'd give others regarding joint promotions?

PR: IMO, a separate website and blog is a must for joint promotion – and not just have it out there in cyberspace, but updated and posted to regularly. We've been thrilled (and a little stunned) at the amount of traffic on our DDU blog, and noticed we've attracted both readers and writers. And of course, each individual author promotes their book on their own website and/or blog.

At last year's RWAus and NZ conferences we handed out promotional postcards, which created a buzz beforehand and also showed our publisher we were willing to promote the series. I personally love doing this sort of "window dressing" stuff (plus I'm a little bit of a control freak :-)) and quite happily took on the task of site, blog and postcards. I was quite chuffed when

Harlequin Sydney actually decided to use the postcard blurb for the Australian and NZ covers!

As to advice on joint promo – cheap doesn't always mean 'cheap'. In terms of money, the website and 2 year hosting was about \$30 from each of us. The 500 postcards came from Vistaprint www.vistaprint.com.au and were on special. I didn't charge for my time on the website :-)) which was another bonus. The important thing is to have everyone discuss and agree on a costing and plan beforehand (preferably 3-6 months ahead). Then you can start targeting your audience – bookstores, local conferences, guest blogs, etc.

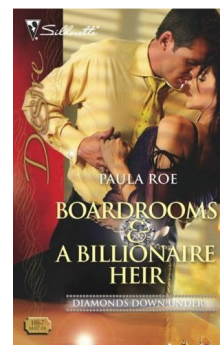
Q: What have you enjoyed most about contributing to this continuity series?

PR: The energy, enthusiasm and camaraderie between fellow writers. Writing is such an insular, sometimes lonely business so it was great to brain-storm and collaborate with others who know exactly what it's like. I jumped at the chance to work with Bron, Maxine, Yvonne and Tessa – writers I've known and loved since their pre-published days. And Jan, well, I'd loved her writing for ages and was thrilled to find out she's my kinda gal too <vbg>.

Boardrooms & A Billionaire Heir

"I'm a man you sleep with, not fall in love with."

Jake Vance was danger in a designer suit, a charming corporate raider. When he set his sights on Blackstone's, Australia's richest diamond dealers, Holly McLeod's primary assignment was as his assistant; her secondary was as a spy...



Yvonne Lindsay wraps up Diamonds Down Under with book six, **Jealousy & A Jeweled Proposition** which is due out in July this year.

Q: How did the idea originate? And how much work did you do before presenting the idea to MJ?

YL: When Maxine Sullivan sold to Desire MJ said that we had enough Down Under Desire authors to think about a continuity. Needless to say, we ran with it!

Unfortunately, Nalini Singh's other contract commitments with her Psy/Changling series meant she had to decline and at about that time Fiona Brand (as a Silhouette author moving to Desire) was also asked. Again, unfortunately, her contract commitments forced



Diamonds Down Under: the continuity series

her to pull out but not until we'd done some amazing brainstorming. At that point we were either going for either a five book series or have Bron write both the first and last books. And then Paula Roe sold to Desire and there was our sixth author!

MJ had a firm idea about the order she wanted the authors in, which meant shuffling some of the stories around and then brainstorming up some new ideas with Paula. Some days I wondered if we were ever going to get the continuity off the ground but we're a persistent bunch and everything came together in the end! J

Q: What have you enjoyed most about contributing to this continuity series?

YL: The research! Loved looking up about diamonds (what self-respecting woman wouldn't?) and really enjoyed the forensic and police recovery research with relation to the plane crash and victim identification. I was lucky enough to have a direct line to a scientist with Crimtrac in Australia who was more than happy to explore our theories regarding the victim ID process, etc. and, once the police officer with the NSW Water Police realised I wasn't kidding, we had some really interesting dialogue. I found the experts really enjoyed talking about the different aspects of their work so long as I didn't want to talk specific events and I really loved expanding theories and possibilities with them.

Q: Would you like to work on another continuity series if the opportunity arose?

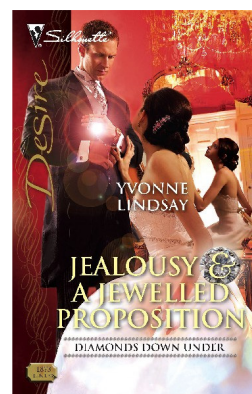
YL: I think I'd love to work on a continuity where the "Bible" was already cast in stone by the editorial team leading it. We were different in that we had to create the whole series from scratch and that was extremely time-consuming. In the time it took us to brainstorm the various aspects and stories in Diamonds Down Under, I could have written another entire book of my own. Things like researching the Australian Federal Aviation rules and regulations regarding passenger lists, for example, took several nights away from my writing time and at that stage I still held an office manager position too. So, I think it would be quite a treat to get the skeleton of your story, and where it stands amongst the other stories in the continuity, and expand on that.

Jealousy & A Jeweled Proposition

"I won't make promises I can't keep."

Ever since their one night together, making love again to Rachel Kincaid was all Matt Hammond thought about.

That and destroying the Blackstone diamond empire and avenging his family...



Prizes for conference raffles and goodie bags required

Do you have something to offer towards the conference raffles or goodie bags?
Can you use your contacts to generate raffle prizes, giveaways for the goodie bags, etc?

Please contact Rachel Collins if you have something you can donate
(rachel.collins@xtra.co.nz)

Volunteers required

Can you spare time for a small job during the conference? We'd love to hear from you and it's a great way to meet new people.

If so, please email our volunteer co-ordinator Kris Pearson
(kris.p@paradise.net.nz)



MEMBER SUCCESSES



COMPILED BY JEAN DREW

VIV CONSTABLE: Learned from the coordinator of the suspense category of the GOTCHA that Alison Lyons, Harlequin Intrigue, has requested her full manuscript of MAN WITH A MISSION. It's the same story that finalled in the Second Chance Contest. So it seems it's on two editors' desks. Doing the happy dance for you, Viv.

SARA HANTZ'S (Sally Rigby) book THE SECOND VIRGINITY OF SUZY GREEN (Flux) made the New York Public Library Books for the Teen Age List (2008), which selects the best of the previous year's publishing for teenagers. This list is sent to every library in the USA and can be ordered online. Woohoo, Sara/Sally

MAREE ANDERSON found out she was a finalist in Valley Forge Romance Writers SHEILA competition! It's a paranormal fantasy, can't mention the title, but it was first 30 pages plus synopsis and it's already on its way to Kate Duffy at Kensington. Everything crossed for you, Maree.

NALINI SINGH: Our girl's done it again. She has won the Sir Julius Vogel Award for best Novella/Novelette for 2007 for her story, BEAT OF TEMPTATION, in the anthology ENCHANTED SEASON. What can we say, Nalini?

ZANA BELL'S historical convict novel FORBIDDEN FRONTIER (Mira, Harlequin Australia) came out in April. Great news, Zana.

HELEN BIANCHIN'S THE MARTINEZ MARRIAGE REVENGE spent two weeks at the Borders #1 spot. Mega congratulations, Helen.

SHIRLEY WINE is a runner-up with the first 100 words of her WIP in the Bookends LLC, literary agents, Women's Fiction competition. Well done, Shirley.

EMILY GEE is a 2008 RITA Award finalist with THIEF WITH NO SHADOW.

ANNA CAMPBELL reports that CLAIMING THE COURTESAN won the *Romantic Times BOOK Reviews* Reviewers' Choice Award for Best First Historical Romance. And even more good news. CLAIMING THE COURTESAN and UNTOUCHED, also by Anna, have both been nominated in the Best Regency Historical Romance category of the 2008 RITA Awards. There'll be a few hoarse throats at RWA this year, methinks.

CLARE SCOTT'S children's humorous small novel, THE GREAT SHAVE, in the brand-new Lightning Strikes series with Walker Books (Australia) is due to launch 1 May. To be sold in general bookshops in NZ and Australia aimed at children (esp. boys) 8-14 yrs.

Romance Writers of New Zealand Inc.

Notice of Meeting

It is hereby given that the sixth Annual General Meeting of the Romance Writers of New Zealand Inc (RWNZ) will be held on Saturday 16th August 2007, at the Waipuna Hotel, Auckland. Members wishing to propose remits to be considered at this meeting must send them to the Secretary by **5pm Friday 30th May 2008** via mail to: **AGM Remits, RWNZ, P O Box 10264, Dominion Road, Auckland**

Please note that to be accepted remits:

- May only be proposed by a current member;
- Need to be seconded by a current member;
- Must be dated;
- Must be accompanied by arguments for the remit.



Pat Snellgrove
President

Romance Writers of New Zealand Inc.

National Executive Committee Job Descriptions

Please use the nomination form enclosed in this newsletter to put forward nominations for any of these Executive positions by 30 May 2008.

President

Tasks:

- Serve as the Chief Executive Officer of RWNZ.
- Serve as spokesperson in regard to established policy.
- Call, set the agenda for, and preside over all meetings of the Executive Committee and meetings of the membership.
- Appoint, with Executive approval, such committees as may be needed or provided for in the Rules and the chairpersons of such committees.
- Serve as ex-officio member of all committees.
- Appoint, with the approval of the Executive, non voting office holders.
- Execute RWNZ business as specified by the Executive Committee and established policy including, but not limited to the expenditure of RWNZ funds in accordance with the annual budget approved by the Executive.
- Open and close all bank accounts in conjunction with the Treasurer and Secretary.
- Act as cheque signatory.
- Co-ordinate all activities.
- Attend Executive meetings (in person, via phone or the internet).
- Fulfil any other obligations designated by the Executive.

Treasurer

Tasks:

- Open and close all bank accounts in conjunction with the President and/or Secretary.
- Act as cheque signatory.
- Ensure all monies received are receipted and banked.
- Ensure all accounts are paid by due date.
- Keep annual cash book, computerised accounts and/or any other records deemed appropriate by the auditor showing adequate record of financial transactions to enable a clear up to date position of financial statements.
- Ensure that the financial statements are ready for auditing at the end of the financial year.
- Attend Executive meetings (in person, via phone or the internet). Present a financial statement at Executive meetings.
- Arrange for accounts to be audited annually.
- Present an audited set of financial statements at the Annual General Meeting.
- Prepare budgets.
- Keep an asset register.
- Fulfil any other obligations designated by the Executive.

Vice President

Tasks:

- Preside over all meetings of the Executive in the absence of the President.
- Assume the duties of the President in the event the President is temporarily incapacitated or otherwise unable to perform.
- Until such time as the Vice President may be required to assume the duties of the President they will:
 - Act as Chapter liaison
 - Assume other duties to be decided upon in consultation with the rest of the Executive at the beginning of the term.
- Attend Executive meetings (in person, via phone or the internet).
- From time to time fulfil any other obligations designated by the Executive.

Membership Secretary

Tasks:

- Maintain a membership list.
- Respond to queries by people seeking membership.
- Register new members and send them membership packs.
- Send out membership accounts.
- Attend Executive meetings (in person, via phone or the internet).
- Send address labels to the newsletter editor.
- Fulfil any other obligations designated by the Executive.

Secretary

Tasks:

- Open and close all bank accounts in conjunction with the President and Treasurer.
- Be responsible for the recording and preserving of minutes to all Executive meetings and presenting such minutes to the Executive for corrections and approval.
- Prepare the nomination form, proxy form, notice of AGM and Agenda.
- Send forms to members at the appropriate times
- Send election ballot papers (if necessary) to members.
- Prepare minutes of the AGM
- Fulfil any other obligations designated by the Executive.
- Act as cheque signatory.

Publicity Officer

Tasks:

- Serve as spokesperson in regard to established policy.
- Have responsibility for all publicity and press releases.
- Arrange sponsorships.
- Organise fundraising through events and applications to funders.
- Attend Executive meetings (in person, via phone or the Internet).
- Fulfil any other obligations designated by the Executive.

HOW I CRIT

By Rachel Robinson

Since I started the RWNZ-RWAust critique partner register, I've had lots of requests from people about "how" to critique. The nuts and bolts, nitty-gritty details. Thing is, there's such a range of critiquing styles, and of the tools used for the task, that it's hard to give a definitive answer. So I asked some experienced writers how they critique and along the way I found some fascinating information and picked up some tips for my own critiquing.

Shelley Munro

Multi-genre and prolific author of books such as the romantic suspense called Wanderlust (April 08, Cerridwen Press)

Basically I tackle a critique for another writer in the same way I edit my own work. I read through the chapters slowly, looking at both the big and small picture at the same time. I use the track and edit feature on MS Word and will leave notes throughout as well as highlight overused words or echoes. I suggest alternatives or places where the author can add an emotional hit. I try to give reasons for my comments where I might consider a fact in setting or character behaviour suspect since I always like to know "why". Yes, I was that annoying child who wanted to know why all the time. My critique partners probably get tired of me asking "why is the character acting that way?", but better me than the reader. Along with the suggestions for additions and/or improvements I like to comment on places where the author has done a good job and use a lot of smiley faces. At the end of the critique I usually do a "wrap up" of any problems in the plot or with character motivation and will again reiterate the things the writer did well.

My approach might differ slightly with a beginner writer. I think at the beginner stage a thorough critique can scare the writer off and overwhelm them. If the beginner has numerous problems I might highlight the worst ones and take things from there, adding another "fix" as the critiquing relationship moves forward and the writer improves with their skill set. Of course I'll also mention the things they've done well. Each author is different and this makes each critique unique.

At the end of the day each critique is subjective. The author can take what they like from the critique and chuck the parts that don't work for them. It's not my job to write their book. My job as a critiquer is to help them see any problems they might miss because they are too close to their work.

Melissa James (Lisa)

Award-winning author of Harlequin Romances such as Celebrity Wedding of the Year (in the Conveniently Wed anthology, 2008).

I've had eight critique partners past and present, and I can say I've been blessed by them all, with not one negative experience. Having so many CPs (currently five, all very good friends) is great for me. They've all helped me to stretch as a writer and critique partner. I love the challenge of it; I'm learning so much. It's good as a person because while I critique instinctively, I tend to be impatient and blunt in my execution. I've learned to say things in gentler ways, to read things twice before I make a comment, and I'm learning to explain more thoroughly. If I know something, the whole world should...not the best way to go about critiquing! I've learned to slow down and *show, don't tell* on critiquing, showing things I think they could work on. I now don't say it, but show constructive ways to do it. I'll change something, put it in my words, to show them what I mean, and then they're free to do it in their own unique way.

For critiquing, my best advice is to be both thorough and thoughtful. Everyone writes differently, and they shouldn't have to write the way you want them to. That's what makes every book unique. Hurting feelings is *not* a constructive way to teach someone. I don't like people saying awful stuff about my work (there are one or two reviews out there about my first book that really hurt at the time!), so I work hard at being positive as well as tactful on suggested changes.

HOW I CRIT cont.

Honesty should always be bordered with kindness and encouragement - so definitely tell them what you think, but in the most positive way possible. All things you want others to say to you, etc. And this has helped my writing, too. Thinking of new ways to put things has flowed into my books, making me more thoughtful on how my characters should speak or act, making for more likable characters. And that would never have happened without every one of my wonderful critique partners, past and present.



Barbara Jeffcott Geris

Current holder of the Valerie Parv Award and all-round fabulous person.

Sandii and I have been critique partners for over a year so we've become very familiar with what each other needs from a critique.

We use three tools for critiquing. The first thing we do is swap individual chapters as we write them. I use the "track changes" function in MS Word to highlight anything I need to query or something that I think works particularly well. I usually focus on big picture issues as well as mechanical details at the same time and generally do the crit from start to finish in one sitting. As I know Sandii's voice and style very well by now I don't feel the need to do a read through the chapter first, but I would probably do that if I was just starting out in a CP relationship.

If we run into plot problems or need to discuss things like GMC further, we do instant messaging on Yahoo. This is great for brainstorming and as everything is saved in an archive it's useful for referring back to later.

Sandii lives in Los Angeles and I live in Marlborough. For the past six months or so we've been talking weekly on the phone using Skype, which is completely free and all you need is the downloaded software and a headset with microphone. The call quality is even better than most phone lines. Not only do we have lots of laughs 'skyping', we've also found it a great way to discuss new ideas and as a way to celebrate and commiserate on our writing journey. Sometimes we'll go through crits that we each have up on our screens so we can give even more detailed feedback about what we did or didn't like about a chapter.

Zana Bell

Talented author of the convict adventure, Final Frontier (April 08, Mira Books, Harlequin Australia).

I critique as I go. This way I can give first impression feedback which, after all, is what readers are going on. I really appreciate a mini commentary on what works, what sounds strange in the margins so I try to do the same. Ideally I use the track changes but being a complete computer idiot, some days I can work it and some days I can't. Then I just change the colour of typing! I always highlight words that for some reason strike me - if they snag my attention, they need looking at. Anything that distracts a reader, even momentarily, spoils the flow of the story. At the end of a chapter, I try to summarise how I felt about something.

The worry, of course, is hurting your CP's feelings but I think trust is quickly gained. For myself, I prefer absolute honesty so negative feedback is always appreciated - preferably balanced nicely with some positive comments! The warm fuzzies are what keep us writing but it's the cold pricklies that hone our craft. It also requires some adaptation to the other person's writing style which is why it's important to have compatibility - in either genre or style. You don't need both but I think if you didn't have either, it would be really hard.

A huge thank you to Shelley, Lisa, Barb and Zana for giving such thorough insight into their critiquing process.

If you're interested in looking for a critique partner, contact me, Rachel, at critpartners@romanceaustralia.com for more information about the scheme and the application form. As you've probably guessed, the writers above are already in critique partnerships, but there are lots of fabulous people on the register - maybe even your perfect match. ☺

Digital Romance

News and views from the world of romance e-publishing

Focus on: Beyond Sales Volume....

In choosing an e-publisher I always put a great deal of emphasis on strong or steadily growing sales volume. As a general rule, a press that is good at selling books also tends to be competent in other areas. However there are certainly other factors to take into account. Some presses achieve good sales through a boom and bust method that ultimately leaves them over-extended and bankrupt, such as *Triskelion* who embarked to quickly from e- to print and proved unable to support the costs of returns.

But quite aside from sales, there are other considerations. Some presses address a special niche where sales may be steady but will never be huge—such as stories catering to a certain uncommon fetish. If an author enjoys writing a specific kind of material they need to find a press respected by that readership. A smaller press with lower output may also provide a supportive environment for an author who prefers to build their confidence gradually rather than jump straight in the deep end. And finally some small presses allow you to get to know specific editors, staff and other authors who might prove valuable contacts.

I would still argue that there are some things offered by lower-selling presses that are not the boons they might seem. For example, an emphasis on being treated like family with promised of sisterhood and friendship. Good professional relationships may develop into friendships of a type, but to offer this up front puts the cart before the horse. In my experience presses focused on being warm and friendly tend to be those that are more likely to turn on you with negative emotions when you are perceived as slighting or criticising them in any way.

It is also often suggested that getting published in any way is a great boon for the author. But being published badly can in fact be worse than not being published at all. A writer must keep in mind that a substandard story, poorly edited, can haunt their career. And if you published with a press others consider amateurish or dishonest you risk being tarred with the same brush to some extent—certainly if you openly endorse them.

Ultimately e-publishing at all makes most sense if you write material that sells well in this format, and it pays to start submitting to the top sellers and decide in advance where you draw the line and will put the book aside rather than insist on publishing it any way possible. Finally, if you spend months or years writing a book realise that you need to spend at least a few days or weeks researching the press you submit it too.

Recent Events:

[March 17] Closed: ShadowRose: Or, to be more accurate, they have vanished. While there has been no official winding up of this business they have ceased selling their books and have been out of communication with authors for many months now.

[March 24] Closed: Dark Eden: By contrast *Dark Eden* closed in an orderly fashion, releasing all manuscripts, due to the owner suffering from a recurrence of cervical cancer.

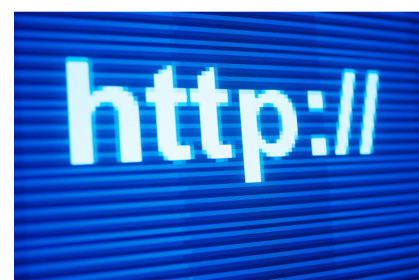
[March 25] The only constant.....: *Eternal Press* has been sold by Julie. A. D'Arcy to Allyson Robertson.

[March 26] RITA no more: RWA clarified that e-books too “published” for the Gold Heart awards but not published enough for the RITAs—that is, ineligible for either award.

[April 6] Opened: Sapphire Blue: Submissions by invitation only:
<http://www.sapphirebluepublishing.com/>

Next time: How to research an e-publisher's reputation before you submit.

Emily Veinglory



Who put the “Clendon” in the Clendon Award?

By Shirley Megget

It is my first romance writer's meeting here in Auckland and I am intrigued by the popular diminutive blonde with the five foot ten attitude. It is her shoes... They have heels at least three inches high, and are Pink. It is the first time I have seen real kick-ass shoes in the flesh, so to speak. I am deeply envious. She has brought along a box of the latest romance novels and talks knowledgably about each book and each author. She also talks about the Clendon (a.k.a. 'finish the damn book') Award, and I learn it is the biggie of writing competitions in the RWNZ year.

Her name is Barbara.

Fast forward eighteen months to my second RWNZ conference. I have learned Barbara is married to Peter Clendon. What a coincidence about the surname, I think, as I admire all the rosettes worn by the award finalists and dream of finishing my damn book.

By my third conference I finally cotton on to the fact the Clendons of the Clendon Award are the same Clendons of *Barbara's Books*, the same shoe-wearing Barbara who attends nearly all the Auckland romance writer meetings, the same Peter with the coincidental surname. (You'll note how quick I am to put two and two together...)

So how did this bookshop duo get hooked into the romance writing scene? Recently I was at their shop so I asked them.

Barbara gives Jean Drew, founder of RWNZ, the credit. Since *Barbara's Books* was devoted to stocking and selling primarily romance novels Jean asked Barbara to speak at the first RWNZ conference. With her typical thorough preparation, Barbara researched her audience, some published and many unpublished romance writers. To her surprise, she found few romance writers were regular readers of the genre; that although they were writing romance they had little or no idea of what was current in romance writing, romance publishing, or reader preference. Further contact with RWNZ showed we were writers who could write the synopsis and three chapters, but the other nine or so chapters? Oh. Not so good.

Barbara points to Peter and says, "It was *your* idea..."

On a trip over the ditch to a RWAus conference Barbara and Peter got talking to Emma Darcy about the Emma Darcy Award, an Australian writing competition requiring a full manuscript. Back at the hotel, Peter enthusiastically said to Barbara, "We could do that in New Zealand!"

Shortly after, in 1998, the first Clendon Award was in place, with *Barbara's Books* readers being inveigled into reading the initial manuscripts and rating them. Here, Barbara laughs. With typical Kiwi cheek, Barbara rang Ann-Leslie Tuttle, editor at Harlequin, and suggested she would like nothing better than to read three unsolicited full manuscripts from New Zealand (the inaugural finalists) within a specified time frame, to which the bemused Ann-Leslie agreed.

In recent years the Clendon Award has been judged by Leslie Wainger of Silhouette Books.

Barbara observes that while writing competitions are good, one can get hung up on the writing technicalities and forget the end user: the reader. The beauty of this competition, the Clendons say, is in the reader participation. The Clendon Award taps right into the heartland of reader choice and taste. Market research at its most creative, you could say. If the basic story idea is flawed then no amount of technically correct writing can compensate.

Barbara and Peter estimate about 80% of the finalists in the Clendon Award go on to be published. "And," chips in Peter, "it doesn't hurt to have [Clendon Award finalist] on your query letter."

Asked what attracted Barbara to own a bookshop, Peter laughs, "She'd read all the books in the library and needed another source!" But both are compulsive and prodigious readers: they know their market inside out and keep abreast of the latest story trends. Given half a chance they are more than happy to discuss anything to do with books, be it authors, story-lines, or best-seller lists – but outside working hours, please.

And would they ever become writer, themselves? They look at each other and smile. Maybe, they hedge. For now, they're quite happy with what they're doing.

Biopic: **Shirley Megget** lives in South Auckland on a large and untamed garden with a miscellany of animals. She has had a variety of jobs, including music therapist, shearing roust-about, and life insurance saleswoman. Her current job description includes PA to her retired husband, gardener and general handyman, and (most enjoyably) writer.



THE WORLD OF PUBLISHING. INDUSTRY NEWS AND OTHER CONTESTS

Sources include Publishers Weekly, Publishers Marketplace, Cindi Myers Market Newsletter and RWA e-notes.

Snippets from a recent Cindi Myers' newsletter

While at the Novelists, Inc. conference (www.ninc.com) in New York, she picked up some market info from editors in attendance:

- Senior Editor Shauna Summers is looking for 'big, contemporary romance' for Bantam Dell.
- Dianne Moggy, director of Global Single Titles at Harlequin Books, says HQN is looking for contemporary romance, sexy historical romance and romantic suspense. Mira is also looking for romantic suspense manuscripts.
- Jennifer Enderlin, Senior Editor of St. Martin's Press, shared her four-point checklist for deciding whether or not she wants to work with an author:
 1. Do I love this author's writing?
 2. Do I like working with this author?
 3. Is this author reliable?
 4. Does this author sell?

While an author who meets all four criteria is great, three out of four is pretty good. If the author meets none of the four, that's not the author for her. (And yes, she is still looking for a big, really sexy western historical romance.)

- Tom Colgan of Berkley Prime Crime has no plans to cut back -- the imprint is doing well.
- Betsy Mitchell, Editor in Chief of Del Rey Books, said they plan to increase their offerings of 'female-oriented' science fiction and fantasy.
- Amy Pierpont, Editorial Director of Grand Central Publishing is very interested in western historical romance. She and Lucia Macro, Executive Editor of Avon would both like to see western historicals featuring real, known historical figures.

RWNZ Contest News

For all contest queries, please contact Ellie Huse,
RWNZ Principal Contests Coordinator - elliehuse@yahoo.com

2008 Contest Schedule

Meet the Editor Contest 2008

- ♦ The entry form was enclosed with the last issue of Heart to Heart
- ♦ Entries include the first five pages of your unpublished manuscript
- ♦ Manuscripts that have achieved a top-three placing in previous Meet the Editor/Agent contest are excluded
- ♦ Open to published and unpublished fully paid-up members of RWNZ
- ♦ Up to TWO entries per author
- ♦ Final judge: Cindy Hwang, executive editor, Berkley Publishing
- ♦ All finalists have the opportunity to meet Cindy at conference
- ♦ Contest coordinator: Ellie Huse at elliehuse@yahoo.com
- ♦ Deadline: entries must be postmarked by 23 May 2008



Strictly Single Contest

- ♦ Entries close 26 September 2008
- ♦ Details to follow

MAY NEW RELEASES

HARLEQUIN MILLS & BOON

SEXY

THE GUARDIAN'S FORBIDDEN MISTRESS

Miranda Lee

Her dark guardian...

Nick Coleman had made it to the top the hard way—from rock bottom. But now he was one of Sydney's most eligible and handsome billionaires. The memory of his impoverished childhood only served to remind him that life was tough and so was he; he would never let a woman touch his hardened heart. But he couldn't do that with Sarah. He had promised her late father he would act as her guardian and protect her. And he wanted her *badly*... Perhaps it was Nick's responsibility to teach her personally how wicked and seductive a man could be?

SEXY SENSATION

TAKEN BY THE BAD BOY

Kelly Hunter

Bad boy... good loving!

Working on a small island and hiring out scooters to tourists hasn't quite met Serena's expectations, but helicopter pilot Pete Bennett has. She can't resist the glint of sin in his eyes. But Pete never falls for a girl; she will fall for *him*, and he's the one to walk away... After a month, their supposedly temporary affair is still as hot and heavy as ever. By now Pete should be ready to roam. So what's keeping Serena in his arms?

SWEET

THE LONER'S GUARDED HEART

Michelle Douglas

Breaking down the walls... one kiss at a time

Josie was touched that her brothers had organised a holiday for her, she certainly needed one. Only the location isn't the lively resort she'd been hoping for, but a sparsely furnished cabin in a beautiful but isolated Australian idyll. Her only neighbour for miles is attractive, but reticent Kent Black. Following a family tragedy, Kent has cut himself off from the world. Josie can't help but be intrigued by this solitary man, and with her bubbly, warm personality she's determined to pick away at the iron padlock around his heart.

THE SINGLE DAD'S PATCHWORK FAMILY

Clair Baxter

Single mum meets single dad

Chase Mattner has come to secluded Leo Bay to raise his daughter. In their house by the ocean, he plans a simple life. Regan Jantz isn't looking for distractions either. With a tuna farm to run, and two young sons to bring up alone, she's got her hands full. But as single parents, Regan and Chase form a special bond. Taking the kids swimming and for boat trips in the bay makes them feel like a real family. Could a proposal from this gorgeous single dad make them one?

MEDICAL

HIS ISLAND BRIDE

Marion Lennox

The city doctor's proposal...

Dr Sam Renaldo has travelled to Ocean Spray to make amends for his twin brother who abandoned a woman pregnant with his babies. But Sam is immediately struck by Susie Mayne: the island's only medic, and single mother of twins. Susie is equally struck by Sam. But, while he's nothing like Grant, he is his twin brother. How can she trust him not to break their hearts? But Susie and the twins give Sam the love and family he has always wanted, and he'll do anything to have the chance to take care of them for ever.

MAY NEW RELEASES

THE SURGEON BOSS'S BRIDE

Melanie Milburne

Fighting for her very special surgeon

Brilliant surgeon Ben Blackwood grew up with nothing. He's fought for everything he has. So when the rich daughter of the man who made Ben's career path near impossible appears as his new trainee, Ben isn't happy.

But Georgiana Willoughby is nothing like he imagined. She's beautiful and has the potential to be a fantastic surgeon. Sparks fly between them, but Ben can't let himself get involved. They are too different. So it's up to Georgiana to show Ben that opposites can attract...

BLAZE

BURNING UP

Sarah Mayberry

Somebody get some ice... it's steamy in here!

Spending a month as personal chef for an overly indulged and mouth-watering man? Sophie Gallagher is so up for the challenge. She's immune to charm... or so she thinks. Because when gig screen star Lucas Grant turns up the temptation, she discovers he's earned the name hottest man alive.

Sophie is fun, vivacious and couldn't be farther from Lucas's usual bimbo bombshell type. But as sizzling as they are between the sheets, once his hiatus is over, the credits will roll on this fling. Saying goodbye, however, isn't as easy as he thought.

DESIRE SINGLES

SATIN & A SCANDALOUS AFFAIR

Jan Colley

"I want you..."

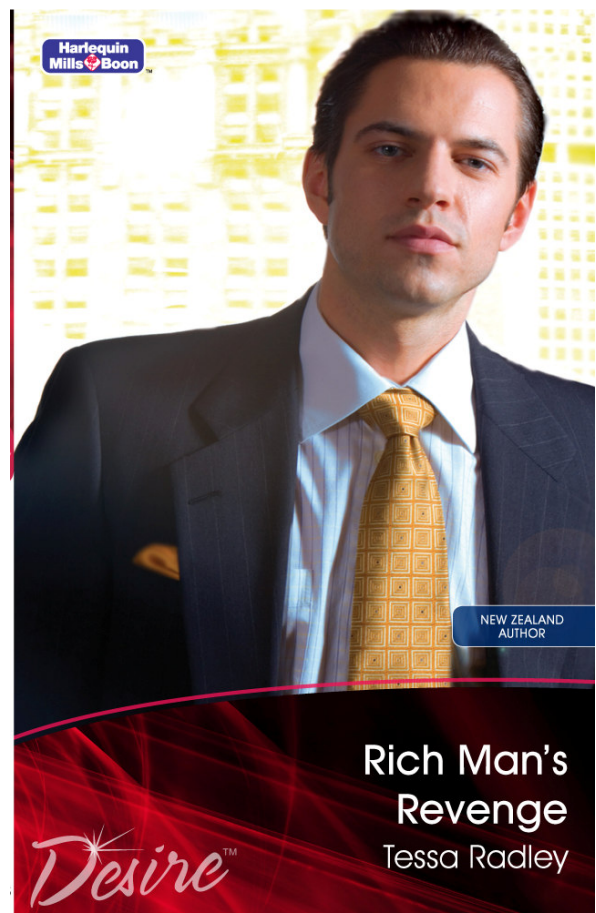
What would it take for Danielle Hammond to design a necklace for one of the world's highest-priced diamonds? Gem broker Quinn Everard wasn't above using blackmail to get Danielle to take the job. She was the only designer worthy of the piece and the only woman he wanted as his new mistress. Insisting she complete her work at his secluded Australian home, the millionaire soon had Danielle under his seductive influence. But he had to watch out or the smart, sexy woman could uncover every one of his well-kept secrets.

RICH MAN'S REVENGE

Tessa Radley

He'd make her pay

Hell-bent on revenge, Italian businessman Rico D'Alessio would stop at nothing to destroy the Sinclair family. Taking eldest daughter Danielle Sinclair as his bride was a start. Making her pregnant with his heir would prove the ultimate payback. But falling for his bride of revenge? Even this most cunning of rich men had not counted on that turn of events or the secrets such a shocking union would reveal.



RWNZ NEWS AROUND THE REGIONS

Regional convenor contacts

AUCKLAND – Frances Housden
email: fhousden@xtra.co.nz

CHRISTCHURCH – Sue Knight
email: sueknight@ihug.co.nz

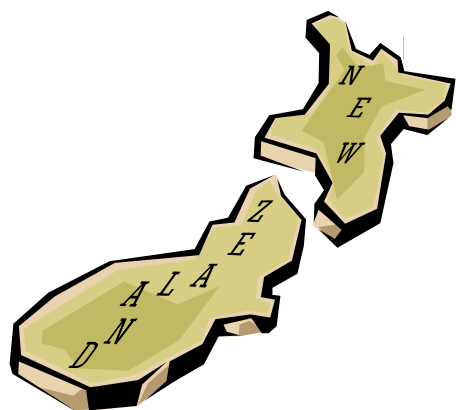
MANAWATU – Joanne Cleland
email: d.j.cleland@xtra.co.nz

HAWKE'S BAY – Ginny Suckling
email: ginny.suckling@xtra.co.nz

NELSON – Cherie Skinner & Sally
Astridge
email: bruceastridge@aol.com or
cheriesk@hotmail.com

WAIKATO, BAY OF PLENTY & KING
COUNTRY – Liz Heywood
email: liz.heywood@gmail.com
phone: (09) 2351404

WELLINGTON – Ellie Huse
email: elliehuse@yahoo.com



Don't see your region listed here? If you're interested in helping to start a local RWNZ group in your area, please contact RWNZ president Pat Snellgrove via email rwnzpresident@xtra.co.nz or our membership secretary Rachel Collins on rachel_collins@xtra.co.nz

AUCKLAND

The April meeting was slightly disappointing as we only had 13 members attending, but those who didn't show up missed out on a very informative talk by Jane, Norah and Yvonne. In May, Helen Kirkman and Frances Housden will be talking on using actual events in history to move your plot and characters through the story.

We meet on May 3rd at the Three Kings Tennis Pavilion at the corners of Mt Albert and Mt Eden Roads. Time 12:30 pm. Bring a small plate for lunch and remember our monthly raffle.

WAIKATO, BAY OF PLENTY & KING COUNTRY

Our April meeting was held at Tyree Bidgood's home. Jenny Yates gave an excellent workshop on 'Writing the Love Scene' and we shared our homework – two pages of foreplay!

We have several member successes. Gracie Stanners came 4th in the North Texas RWA 'Great Expectations' competition for mainstream with romantic elements. Well done, Gracie. Tyree Bidgood has entered her novel for the Clendon, has entered a short story competition, and has started her second novel. Way to go Tyree, we're all crossing our fingers for your success!

Sandra, Angela, Sarah, Gracie, Norma, and Catherine are all writing hard.

Shirley Wine was runner up in the Book Ends LLC (they are agents), '100 words women's fiction' and they want to see the completed manuscript. Well done, Shirley! Leanne has a new writing room, complete with new laptop, and is bringing her story 'Roadworks' for the next meeting. Gaylene has started two novels started, and has just completed her 14th assignment for a journalism course. Jenny has had articles published in the local newspaper, a eulogy, and presented us with an excellent workshop. Well done, ladies!

Our next meeting is on Saturday 17th May at Norma Smyth's home in Hamilton. We will be having a workshop by Gracie Stanners called 'Planning the Novel.'

HAWKE'S BAY

The Hawke's Bay meeting is happening roughly every two months. It's a social chit-chat about writing and anything else anyone would like to share. The last meeting was on 19th April so we hope to meet again in the middle of June. If anyone would like to know more details please contact me at ginny.suckling@xtra.co.nz or on 06 843 9715.

WELLINGTON

The Wellington area group had another enjoyable meeting at Ellie's on a very wet and miserable day. As usual, discussion was lively.

Louise described for us what 'fan fiction' is, and advised us to go to fanfiction.net and see for ourselves the huge array of writing that can be accessed (and contributed to).

RWNZ NEWS AROUND THE REGIONS

WELLINGTON cont.

Fan fiction is where characters from an existing TV programme or book have a new story created for them. The authors make no money, so the original creators lose nothing. Louise says “blame Star Trek” – the show was so popular that fans wanted more stories and started writing their own. Hundreds of thousands of people read her work this way – and add instant feedback and reviews.

We also covered synopses, contests, judging, movie adaptations of books and much more. Our next meeting will be at Ellie's home: 135 Milne Drive, Paraparaumu, Kapiti Coast at 1 pm on Saturday, 3 May.

NELSON

This month we met for a lively workshop on plotting, ably taken by our multi-published author, Sally. We learnt about the Scaffold Approach to planning a plot, which uses five towers, named in this order: the meeting; the resolution; the conflict(s); the throb; the moment of respect. So, now all we have to do is write the damn book! Simple, huh? Our next meeting will be at Cherie's house, 248H Annesbrook Drive, 2pm on Saturday, 10 May.

CHRISTCHURCH

At our March meeting we held a Sunday afternoon workshop and critiqued one member's chick lit novel. We had advance copies of the synopsis and a 1000 word extract of her well-written work and had a good time imparting our collective wisdom! Our April meeting will have been at Memories Café on Thursday 17th by the time you read this issue. Our next meeting in May is yet to be decided. Please contact Sue at sueknight@ihug.co.nz for information.

Getting to know our regional convenors

I'm Liz Heywood, the new convenor for the Waikato/Bay of Plenty/King Country group.

I've been writing for 19 years, and have been a member of RWNZ since the first year of its inception.

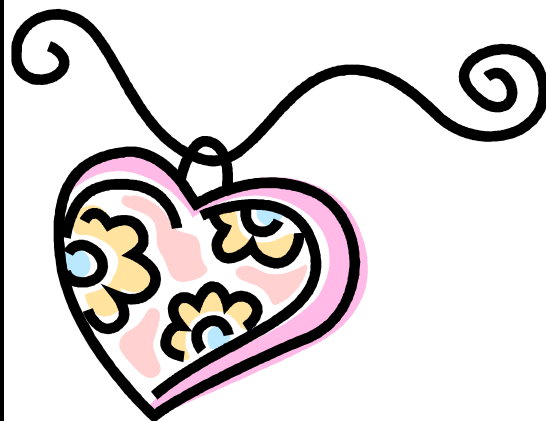
I write horror and romance, and am published in both fields. Or at least, I've had short horror stories published, and my first romantic novel 'Cherished' is due for release here in May and in the US in June. The publisher is Swimming Kangaroo Books and they are in Texas.

I've also had poetry published.

I've made life long friends through RWNZ, and credit them with seeing me through all the teething troubles from first writing to getting published.

Welcome to our most recent new member!

Julie-Ann Miskell, Dunedin



THE NAKED WRITER

Baring all in the world of romance and writing

I recently listened to an audio version of Debbie Macomber's inspiring book, "Knit Together."

It's non-fiction, and includes many of the wonderful anecdotes she told as a guest at our conference back in 2006 with themes such as following your dreams, and setting goals to get you along the path towards that dream. Well worth listening to, though it is available in hardcover too.

I also read something interesting afterwards in a different book, which got me thinking. It said that motivation is made up of two parts and they both have to be extremely high for you to feel really motivated. They were *importance* and *confidence*. So, as an example, if it was massively important to you ('this is my dream, I'll die if I don't become a published writer, I've wanted this since I was ten) but your confidence is low (I'll never sell with all those hard-out Americans to compete against!) once again, your motivation may not be strong enough. (Actually, the book I read was a diet book, so I have taken great liberties with the above example, but it's interesting to ponder.)

Like many of us, part of the attraction of writing fiction is because I loved reading it so much. Nothing better than sitting down to read, especially over brekkie and lunch as the vegemite stains on my Famous Five collection testify.

But I must confess in the past few years, my reading has been a little touch-and-go. It's been hard to concentrate, and I was in the terrible habit of having several books on the go and not finishing them. I have been hugely inspired for some time by Maree Anderson's blog over at www.mareeanderson.com where each month she posts her reading list. Crikey, I used to think; no way would I ever advertise how much I'm reading. I'd be a disgrace to RWNZ. But then I had a thought. If I vowed to post my list on my Naked Writer blog, I'd be totally shamed into reading more.



Well, not being partial to public shame, you can imagine what a massive motivation it is to know I have to be honest and post my reading list at the end of the month.

FYI, that would be *confidence* that I can read, because I know how to, and I'm a tad selfish with my time, and *importance* because I am confessing all to the world.

So I did it, posted my first reading list for March.

Frankly, it was fab because it is making me fall in love with reading again. It reminds me of one of the few quotes I have ever remembered in my life, something Barbara Clendon once said. "You don't just read romance – you wallow in it." Indeed, I have been known to wallow in it so much, I have driven up to the supermarket, sent the kids in with a list, and sat back in the car with my book. Suffice to say, I've read more in the past month than in ages, and it's a blast.

Finally, some extra stuff. Trish Morey has a blog, *A Koala A Day*, via her website where she rates each day as a koala day depending on how many koalas she sees when she goes walking, e.g. if she sees one koala, it's a one-koala day, but as you can imagine a four-koala day is just the best.

(Hard to imagine going for a walk every day and seeing koalas. Imagine if we did that with Kiwis? Oh Lord, it doesn't bear thinking about.)

If you're targeting Harlequin and haven't run by the site recently, then do so, and check out the pod-casts. It's like going to a conference – for free!! These are actually fifteen or so minute audio bites where the editors chat about what they are wanting for their specific lines – thus you are actually hearing it from your prospective editor's mouth. Editors from Special Edition, Desire and Romance are just some of those on the pod-casts.

And last, it is to be expected but apparently the San Francisco RWA conference registrations are at an all time high. Looks like it'll be one heck of a party come late July with a down-under contingent to cheer on Anna Campbell and Emily Gee for the RITAs.

